

Questions and Answers: Submitting Suggestions for Fiscal Year 2011 Projects Funded Under Section 10201 of the 2008 Farm Bill

Q. What is Section 10201 of the 2008 Farm Bill?

A. Section 10201 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (known as the 2008 Farm Bill) directs the Secretary of Agriculture to make Commodity Credit Corporation funds available for early plant pest detection and surveillance, threat identification and mitigation of plant pests and diseases, and technical assistance in the development and implementation of audit-based certification systems and nursery plant pest risk management systems. The 5-year Farm Bill specifies that these funds be made available incrementally, starting with \$12 million in fiscal year (FY) 2009, \$45 million in FY 2010, and \$50 million in FY 2011 and thereafter.

Q. What agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is responsible for implementing Section 10201?

A. USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is responsible for its implementation.

Q. What specific areas will Section 10201 implementation projects address?

A. As in previous years, the FY 2011 spending plan will be organized around six Section 10201 goal areas:

1. Enhance plant pest/disease analysis and survey.
2. Target domestic inspection activities at vulnerable points in the safeguarding continuum.
3. Enhance and strengthen pest identification and technology.
4. Safeguard nursery production.
5. Conduct outreach and education to increase public understanding, acceptance, and support of plant pest and disease eradication and control efforts.
6. Enhance mitigation capabilities.

Q. Who can submit suggestions for a project?

A. APHIS invites all interested stakeholders to submit suggestions for FY 2011 projects. In FY 2010, APHIS

provided \$45 million in funding to more than 50 cooperators, including State departments of agriculture, universities, nonprofit organizations, and USDA agencies, in support of more than 200 projects.

Q. How will suggestions be selected for funding in FY 2011?

A. The evaluation of suggestions will be conducted by a single evaluation team consisting of primary and secondary reviewers. Each primary reviewer will be assigned a randomly selected batch of suggestions to review. The primary reviewer will be responsible for conducting an in-depth analysis of those suggestions. This analysis includes consulting with subject matter and/or technical experts regarding the need for the proposed project and the feasibility of the proposed approach, requesting clarifying information from the submitter as necessary, independently rating the suggestion according to established criteria (explained in the next question), and documenting in writing the strengths and weaknesses of the suggestion.

The secondary reviewer will also rate the suggestions and serve as a resource for the primary reviewer when a second opinion is needed. At the conclusion of the independent review period, the primary reviewer will be responsible for presenting each suggestion in his or her assigned batch to the larger team and facilitating a discussion about the proposed project in order to gain a consensus rating for each suggestion.

Q. What criteria will be used to evaluate FY 2011 project suggestions?

A. The evaluation team members will evaluate the technical factors of the individual suggestions using the evaluation criteria described below. If a suggestion does not address a factor, it will be evaluated as "Low." Strengths, weaknesses, deficiencies, and reviewer questions will be documented for each suggestion. At the conclusion of the independent review period, the entire evaluation team will meet and discuss each technical evaluation factor and agree on a consensus rating for each suggestion.

FY 2011 suggestions will be rated in the following areas:

Criteria 1: Alignment with Section 10201 Goals

The suggestion should clearly identify the goal area to be addressed and explain how the project will further the goals of the Farm Bill. *Note:* The suggestion should **not** list more than one goal area.

Criteria 2: Impact

The suggestion should clearly address the potential

benefit(s) from the proposed activities or deliverables. Emphasis should be placed on projects that will affect high-risk States/areas, address pests of regulatory significance, and/or benefit specialty crop producers and minority or underserved communities.

Criteria 3: Technical approach

The suggestion should discuss the technical approach to be employed, including a description of methodology and a summary of the various tasks to be undertaken. The suggestion should also highlight the cooperators (States, universities, and others) that will be working together to complete the project and the role each will play.

Q. Is APHIS using a formal rating system in the evaluation process?

A. Yes. Suggestions will be rated as “High,” “Medium,” and “Low.” Suggestions possessing virtually all the desired attributes and qualities will be rated as “High.” Suggestions will be rated as “Medium” if they possess some of the desired attributes and qualities and if any weaknesses that are noted have only a minor impact on the suggestion and are easily correctable. Suggestions that lack the desired attributes and qualities necessary to receive a higher rating or that would require major revision to correct weaknesses or deficiencies will be rated as “Low.”

Q. If a suggestion is approved, are there any time limits for using the funding?

A. Federal cooperators must obligate funds by September 30 of the fiscal year in which they are received. Non-Federal cooperators must spend the funds within a 12-month period as specified in the agreement.

Q. How can I submit a suggestion?

A. Visit www.aphis.usda.gov/section10201 for complete submission instructions, including a link to the FY 2011 suggestion form, which is a PDF file that can be filled in on-screen and saved. All submitters must use this form. The Web page also contains an explanation of the evaluation process and criteria.

Q. May I submit the same project suggestion under more than one goal area?

A. No. A project suggestion should be submitted under only one goal area.

Q. How do I request the continuation or renewal of funding for a project that was funded in previous years?

A. If you are working on a project that was funded in FY 2009 or FY 2010 and want to request FY 2011 funding, please complete the FY 2011 suggestion form

and check the “Continuation or Renewal Project” box.

Q. If I submit a suggestion, am I guaranteed to receive funding?

A. No. The submission of a suggestion—either for a new project or the continuation of a previously funded project—does not guarantee that APHIS will fund the project. Suggestions that are consistent with the goals of Section 10201 of the Farm Bill and that strongly meet or exceed the established criteria will be considered for funding. This is not a competitive grant program, and APHIS, in consultation with stakeholders, reserves significant flexibility in the administration of Section 10201.

Q. What is the deadline for submitting a suggestion?

A. APHIS will be accepting suggestions for FY 2011 projects from May 3 through June 18, 2010.

Q. Are there other dates that I should be aware of?

A. Yes. The following dates include all the milestones in the submission and approval process:

May 3, 2010: The FY 2011 suggestion submittal period opens.

June 18, 2010: The FY 2011 suggestion period closes.

June 21, 2010: The evaluation process begins.

July 13–15, 2010: The evaluation team meets to discuss suggestions and develop the first draft of the FY 2011 Spending Plan.

Mid-September 2010 (tentative): Draft FY 2011 Spending Plan released.

September 30, 2010: Approved projects are announced by the end of this fiscal year. Projects will be funded after October 1, 2010.

Q. If I have additional questions, whom should I contact?

A. Please e-mail your questions to PPQ.Section.Farmbill-10201@aphis.usda.gov.

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